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POETRY.

THE STREAM OF LIFE.

BY MRS. SARAH T. BOLTON.

I saw a little fountain rise,
Within a flowery dell,
When first the light of morning skies
In softened radiance fell,
Like some bright presence come to guard
The sparkling treasures well.

A streamlet flowed in matchless grace
Along its pebbly shore;
No shadow rested on its face,
Save when a cloud came o'er;
A moment, and the sparkling waves
Were smiling as before.

It ever sang the same sweet song,
So full of quiet mirth,
And as it gaily danced along
The valley of its birth,
It mirrored stars upon the sky
And blossoms on the earth.

A shining river, wild and free,
Flowed on through blooming bowers,
Where tuneful birds sang merrily
Their love-lays to the flowers;
And bright-eyed hope and joy forgot
To note the passing hours.

The white-winged clouds that flitted by,
Like fancies in a dream;
The varying colors of the sky,
The day-star's silvery beam,
Were painted by an angel's pen
Upon the joyous stream.

A mighty torrent swept along
A towering granite shore;
Its swelling waves were wild and strong,
Its voice a ceaseless roar;
The torrent had forgot the song
The streamlet sang of yore.

On, with a thousand mingled sounds,
'Tis wildly rushing now;
A moment, and it madly bounds
Adown a cataract's brow,
And roars, and whirs, and foams, and scents
In eddying waves below.

On, ever on, in its unrest,
A broad dark stream doth glide;
There is no sunbeam on its breast,
No blossom by its side—
Nor star nor rainbow is impressed
Upon the turbid tide.

Still onward, wearily and slow,
The sluggish stream doth sweep;
Its voice a murmur sad and low;
Its bosom cold and deep;
It seemeth that the raging waves
Have lulled themselves to sleep.

The fountain, pure and full of gloe;
The streamlet glad and bright;
The slinging river, wild and free;
The torrent in its might—
Now mingling with the dark, blue sea,
Are lost to human sight.

Thus, through our guileless infancy,
Through childhood glad and bright,
Through youth's fair day-dreams wild and free,
Through manhood in his might,
Through old age, slow and wearily,
We pass from human sight.

THE STORY TELLER.

From the Saturday Courier.

ALICE BRANDON;

OR,

THE SEWING GIRL.

BY J. H. INGRAHAM.

"A pure young heart and a thrifty needle
Is better than pride and a golden girdle."

"Sir, you have dropped this letter."

The words were few, but they were spoken
In a sweet tone, and in a courteous and mod-

est manner, that the young gentleman to whom
they were addressed involuntarily raised his hat

as he stopped and turned towards her, and with
eyes of a deep and respectful admiration, which

beauty combined with modesty and grace, al-

ways command, took the letter from her hand.

"Thanks, miss; you are very kind to take
the trouble to bring it back to me."

"It was no trouble, sir," answered the young
girl, modestly, and dropping her eyes to the

ground, she added, in that rich cadence which
had already charmed his ear—

"Good evening, sir."

And she passed on her way again with a light
and graceful step, as if she was as cheerful

and hearty as she was beautiful; for though it was
deepening twilight, the young stranger had

seen that her features were uncommonly lovely.

He stood for a moment gazing after her, and

then slightly sighed and remarked, both philo-

sophically and sentimentally—

"How much beauty there is in this world!"

He then resumed his progress. He had five

minutes before come down in the mail-stage, to

pay a visit to an aunt whom he had not seen

since his boyhood, when he used to go to school

in the town he had now once more returned to.

The stage had left him at the inn, and passed

on its way; and as the distance was short, he

took his valise in his hand, and muffled in his

cloak, for it was a clear, bracing autumnal eve-

ning, he proceeded on foot towards the resi-

dence of his aunt, which was a large, square old

family mansion, just out of the town, and half

hid from the street by a group of stately elms

and oaks.

He had passed on his way but a few rods,

when a letter that he had been reading in the

coach, and which he had not probably returned

to his pocket, fell out. At the moment, a young

girl, in a small neat hood, lined with blue silk,

and a closely-fitting dark blue habit, that dis-

played her fine figure, yet without coquetry,

her hands thrust into a little muffled, passed the

spot, not meeting him, but crossing from another

street.

Seeing the letter glitter white upon the ground,

she picked it up, and looking around, saw the

young stranger, whom she immediately hastened

after, and presented him with it, though not with-

out having very naturally glanced at the super-

scription. It was, "Edward Custis, Esq., Phila-

delphia.

The letter thus dropped, and so gracefully

restored, had been received by him two or

three days before from his father, a member of

Congress, who was then in Washington, where it

bore date. The contents were as follows:

MY DEAR EDWARD—I have a few words to

say to you in confidence, and I beg you will re-

ceive them more as the counsel of a friend than

the authority of a father. You have now just

completed your legal studies, and have passed

an honorable examination as a candidate for the

bar. Your career is now in your own hands;

and I have that confidence in your talents and

perseverance which prompts me to anticipate

for you the highest honors of your noble profes-

sion.

You must now take a wife! You will smile

at the abrupt manner in which I have intro-

duced the subject; nevertheless I have written

what I have with seriousness. You have a hand-

some fortune, and are able to live in that style

which becomes your family and position in so-

ciety. I advise you to this because I know you

will be happier. Your mother's death breaks

up my household in a great measure and de-

prives you of a home. Nothing is more danger-

ous for a young gentleman than to live a bac-

chelor's life at a hotel or fashionable boarding-

house. To make no mention of the habits that

he acquires—I do not speak of immoral ones,

for I do not fear that you would fall into any—

he is robbing himself every day of so many hours

of domestic happiness. The home alone is the

place where the heart learns to know itself, and

to unfold its nobler and purer attributes. The

'hearth-stone' develops the man, and elevates

and purifies his character. The finer sentiments,

and the better feelings, the holier emotions, all

the great wealth of the heart, all the abundance

in the treasure-house of his affections, is brought

out within the magic circle of home.

You must be married, Edward! That pa-

rental solitude with which I have trained you

up from boyhood, and followed you through

your academic studies, your collegiate pursuits,

yourself. That such a marriage would gratify

me you already know. So go down and pay a

visit of two or three weeks at your aunt's, be-

fore you fall in love with anybody else. I am

sure that Caroline will catch you without re-

medy!

Your attached father,

C. CUSTIS.

P. S.—Caroline Clifford has about six thou-

sand dollars in her own right, and will probably

have ten thousand more when her aunt dies.

But this is no consideration to you, as your for-

tune is ample. Had she not a dollar, I should

equally desire to bring about the match. Now,

be dole, my dear boy, and try and make me,

as well as your cousin, happy; for a happy girl

she will be to get you for a husband.

C. C.

This was the letter which had been picked

up by the young girl in the hood lined with blue

silk. Edward Custis had taken it out to read

over again as he drew near the town where the

fair subject of it resided, and but for the maiden

who had crossed his path, would have lost it, and

perhaps exposed to the whole village gossip the

special object of his visit to B—.

As he now pursued his way towards the man-

sion of Madame Powell, as the respectable maid-

en aunt was called throughout the town, he

could not get the sweet, pure face of the young

girl out of his thoughts; though, it is true, he

did not try very hard to banish them. At length

he reached the gate, and entered the spacious

walk that led to the house.

We will pass over his reception, which, by

and aunt, was all that he could desire.

The beauty of Miss Clifford struck him with ad-

miration. He assented in his mind to his fa-

ther's words, that she was one of the most beau-

tiful females he had ever seen. Her age was

just past nineteen. Her education had been all

that wealth could make it. She was perfect in

all feminine accomplishments. But when this

is said, all has been said. Her head was edu-

cated, but not her heart.

Proud of her beauty, proud of her aristocratic

connections, proud of her reputation as an hei-

ress, she had little room for the heart's virtues to

bloom and bear fruit. Such a character could

not be otherwise than purely selfish; and Caro-

line Clifford loved herself infinitely. Her char-

acter exhibited itself in her air and features;

for, beautiful as they were, they betrayed pride

and passion to be active ingredients in her na-

ture. But she had the art to conceal these

darker features; and the most finished and per-

fect veil is a lovely face. Beauty is a mask that

will defy the keenest penetration. It often con-

ceals the worst aspects of moral deformity.

Miss Clifford had successfully concealed the

errors of her character before Mr. Custis. She

hoped that she might win the son through the

father's good will; for she had long had her

thoughts upon Edward Custis. She remembered

him only as a lad, but she knew that he was now

a young man of great wealth, and that if she

could marry him, she could, with her beauty,

take her own rank in the society of the metrop-

olis—perhaps be the very leader of fashion.

With these ambitious views in her heart, she had

played her cards with the father.

After his departure, her aunt made known to

her the recent wishes of the old gentleman, and

told her that they would, probably, by and by,

have a visit from the young heir.

"There is no doubt, Carry," said her aunt,

"that you will at once captivate him by your

beauty. Mr. Custis was almost in love with you

himself; and I think Edward will fall quite in

love. You have only to resolve that he shall,

and you will effect what you will object to."

The week after his arrival, he addressed a

letter to his father:

B—.

MY DEAR FATHER—I have now embraced

the first moment I could steal from the society

of the enchanting Caroline to write you. You

did not say too much in her praise. She is all

that I could desire. Beautiful without a fault—

generous to a fault. She gives much to the poor

daily, and in her character seems to me without

a blemish. You will have your dearest wishes

gratified if I can prevail upon her to accept my

hand. To win and wear such a treasure would

make me perfectly happy. In a few days, I

think I shall make her the offer of my hand and

heart.

To-morrow night, Madame Powell is to give

a large party, chiefly on my account. I assure

that Caroline will eclipse the brightest coronet

of beauties that can be assembled here.

Your affectionate son,

EDWARD CUSTIS.

The hour after he had written this letter, and

was returning from the post office, where he had

taken it himself, to enjoy the walk thither and

back, he was passing a neat two-story house, of

respectable but unpretending exterior, close by

the street, when he saw at the window a face

which had more than once flitted like a fair vi-

sion across his mind since he had been in B—.

He had seen it before only in the soft radiance

of twilight, but it was indelibly imprinted upon

his remembrance. It was that of the young girl

who had picked up the dropped letter. She

was now seated at the window, her exquisite

profile towards him as he was passing by. She

was bending gracefully forward, and seemed to

be sewing. He stopped full, almost without be-

ing aware of it, and gazed upon her charming

face. There was a sweet, serene beauty repos-

ing thereon, which he had never seen anything

like, except in the divine Scriptural heads—the

Marys or Madonnas of Raphael.

She looked up, and, seeing him, blushed deeply

with instant recognition and surprise. Re-

called to himself, he bowed with an air of re-

spectful apology and moved on his way, wonder-

ing who that angelic and sweetly modest girl

could be. A few paces on, he met a servant of

Madame Powell.

"James, who lives in that house with the green

blinds?"

"That small one, sir, with the low windows

and the lilacs in the yard?"

"Yes."

"The widow Brandon, sir?"

"Who is she, James?"

"Well, sir, I believe she is a very respectable

person indeed," exclaimed James, with a formal

air, as if he did not acknowledge any personal

acquaintance with the family. "Her husband

used to be a doctor; but instead of curing sick

people, he was sick all the time himself, and

never had any practice."

"Is he dead?"

"Yes, sir. He died about five years ago, very

poor. The family is respectable, I believe, and

I remember when the widow used to go to the

first parties, and her daughter, too; but it's not

nowadays! Nice people, sir—very nice; but

that's all."

"Thank you, James," answered Edward, giv-

ing way to let him pass on.

When he entered the drawing room, he found

No. 31,
OXFORD
PUBLISHED
EDITED BY
TAYLOR & SON,
IN ADVANCE.
ADVERTISEMENTS
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